

JANET NAPOLITANO
GOVERNOR



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**THE ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' SERVICES PARTNERS WITH
DEPARTMENT OF NAVAJO VETERANS AFFAIRS**

(Phoenix)-On Monday, December 15, 2008, for the first time ever, representatives of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services met with representatives of the Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs to collaborate on common veterans' issues. The Phoenix meeting, hosted by Arizona Department of Veterans' Services Director Joey Strickland was attended by Leo Chischilly, head of the Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs in Window Rock, Arizona, the Navajo capitol.

Teams from the two departments discussed issues of concern to Navajo veterans including the lack of VA medical facilities on the Navajo reservation, locating additional veterans' benefits counselors on the reservation, enhancing the use of telemedicine on the reservation and assisting the Navajo Nation establish an official veterans' cemetery.

"The Navajo Nation would like to bury their loved ones within the four sacred mountains on Navajo land," Chischilly said. "But the closest veterans' cemetery is in Santa Fe, New Mexico, four hours' drive from Window Rock. Some families visit grave sites on Veterans Day or Memorial Day, but most people would prefer something closer to home."

Director Strickland, who is of Choctaw-Cherokee-Lumbee descent, pledged to work closely with the Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs. "When I took over as director of the state's Department of Veterans' Services in July, I committed this agency to serve all of Arizona's veterans," Strickland said. "This cooperation will go a long way in reaching out to a large veteran population that has historically been under served."

The two agencies agreed to meet quarterly, twice in Phoenix and twice in Window Rock each year, to establish and further common goals.